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WisDOT SEEKS PRIORITY FROM FEDS

In a February 10 letter to the state's Congressional delegation, WisDOT Secretary Frank Busalacchi asked for Congress to consider 48 transportation initiatives as high priority projects in the upcoming TEA 21 reauthorization.

The reauthorization is expected to provide a multi-year federal funding program for transportation. The existing TEA 21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century) is a six-year package that expires on September 30, 2003. An authorization sets funding goals and directions that are subject to annual appropriations.

WisDOT asks for \$1.67 billion in federal funding for 44 different highway projects, including the Marquette Interchange reconstruction. It also seeks \$518 million for new transit projects in Dane County, Milwaukee and southeast Wisconsin, along with \$247 million for bus capital needs for 69 transit systems and four Native American groups throughout the state.

FEBRUARY FATALITIES ON THE RISE

At least 51 people lost their lives on Wisconsin highways in February of 2003, seven higher than February of last year, and thirteen higher than the average of the previous five months of February.

Already in 2003, crashes have claimed a total of 112 lives, seven more than during the first two months of last year. The year 2002 ended with a total of 805 fatalities, the worst total in over a decade. WisDOT officials continue to point to speed, alcohol and lack of seat belt use as prime factors in the fatalities.

CORRECTION

The February 21 special edition of the Connector Express incorrectly reported a \$1 million federal earmark for Willow Road in Clark County. The funding is actually designated to Willow Road in the town of Lynne in Oneida County.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar 31 / Apr 1 - Aviation conference, Middleton

AVIATION CONFERENCE APPROACHES

The 2003 Wisconsin Aviation Conference is set for March 31 and April 1 at the Marriott Madison West in Middleton. The conference will bring together nearly 400 airport owners, managers, consultants, pilots and others. This annual event is an important opportunity for Wisconsin's aviation community to share information on timely issues and check out the latest in aeronautics' technology, services and products. For more information, call Jan Severson in the Bureau of Aeronautics at (608) 267-9592, or check out WisDOT's web site at www.dot.wisconsin.gov/news/events/index.htm.

STATE AMTRAK RIDERSHIP DROPS

Amtrak ridership in Wisconsin dipped by about 6% in 2002 as compared to the previous year.

- ♦ Amtrak's *Hiawatha Service*, with seven daily round-trips between Milwaukee and Chicago, carried 397,518 passengers in 2002, a drop of 6.1% from 2001. Ridership did finish on a slight upward boost at the end of the year, however, as 34,521 passengers took the train in December of 2002, up by 2.3% from the previous December.

- ♦ The *Empire Builder*, Amtrak's Chicago-Pacific Northwest route, handled 59,668 passengers at the six Wisconsin stations in 2002, a 6.5% decrease from the previous year. Again, though, December ridership in 2002 outpaced the previous year by a modest 1.7%.

Amtrak route and schedule information is available on-line at www.amtrak.com.

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